

# Group plans freeway vote

By Doug Murphy  
Staff Writer

Twice in the past the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee has gone on record opposing construction of the Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway on Pecos Road.

But just in case there is any doubt, committee members decided Monday night to schedule a special meeting on Feb. 6 to vote again on the Pecos Road alignment.

The outcome is not expected to change.

The committee acts as an advisory body only, however its recommendations carry weight with many Phoenix City Council members, including Greg Stanton who has gone on record opposing the freeway on Pecos Road.

Although the committee opposes the freeway alignment, it remains in support of a freeway in general.

"We have not recommended no-build. We have said Pecos Road is not appropriate," said planning committee chairman Doug Cole.

The committee's regularly scheduled meeting was crowded with people who oppose the freeway, with one exception.

George Rigg, a 15-year resident of Ahwatukee Foothills, spoke out against the no-build option.

"You're not making a decision for the 80,000 people in Ahwatukee Foothills, including myself, you're making a decision for the 1 to 2 million people in the Valley," Rigg said in reference to a recommendation against building a freeway at all.

He explained that the freeway is important to the entire Valley to help provide movement for businesses and employees.

Laurel Arndt, a member of the planning committee, said the point isn't to stop the freeway or to keep it out of Ahwatukee Foothills, but to make sure the proposed freeway addresses the Valley's needs.

Arndt said she is opposed to many elements of the current freeway plan because she thinks there may be better solutions to solving the Valley's transportation problems.

She would like the Arizona Department of Transportation to look farther south to Riggs Road and farther west to Loop 303 for possible Loop 202 routes to accommodate projected growth in the south and west.

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"We're trying to build the right freeway," said Arndt, who is also a member of the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team, which advises ADOT in planning the freeway.

Loop 202 has been on the maps since 1988, but has been on hold for most of that time due to a lack of funding.

Four years ago ADOT organized the citizens advisory team to help advise on updates to the old route that went from Interstate 10 and Pecos Road in Ahwatukee Foothills through South Mountain Park and reconnecting with I-10 around 55th Avenue.

For the east section of the project the only route at the moment is along Pecos Road where 255 to 695 homes would have to be removed to make way for the freeway depending on if it is built at ground level or built below ground to improve soundproofing.

In the western section there are three possible routes that would require the destruction of 120 to 780 homes depending on the route.

Basic construction is estimated to cost between \$995 million and \$1.3 billion depending on the route. That figure does not include the cost of homes, relocation for residents and land.

The citizens advisory team will recommend a western route in February. It will then take a break until May and take up work on the eastern route.

According to ADOT a final decision on the complete route and a judgment on whether to build the freeway will occur in late 2006 or early 2007.